

[By Neal Goswami, Bennington Banner](#)

Vermont's storied Long Trail celebrated its 100th birthday Tuesday, receiving recognition in the U.S. Congress and inspiring a gathering where the trail was formalized 100 years ago.

In Vermont lore, James P. Taylor was at Stratton Mountain when he imagined a trail from Vermont's southern border to Canada. The idea was formalized on March 11, 1910, when a group gathered in Burlington to form the Green Mountain Club, which maintains the 273-mile hiking trail from the Massachusetts through Canada.

The trail was constructed between 1910 and 1930, and is the oldest long-distance trail in the country, according to the club. It follows the main ridge of the Green Mountains from the Massachusetts-Vermont line to the Canadian border as crosses the state's highest peaks.

According to the club, Taylor wanted to "make the Vermont mountains play a larger part in the life of the people." He has done just that, said Vermont Congressman Peter Welch, who congratulated the club Thursday on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives.

"In the past century, Taylor's dream has become a reality as seasoned hikers and novices alike have taken to the trail, traversing the peaks and valleys of Vermont," Welch said. "In the process, they've gained an appreciation for the beauty of Vermont and the importance of stewardship and conservation."

Calling the trail a "national treasure," Welch introduced

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a resolution in its honor. A similar resolution has been introduced in the U.S. Senate by Sens. Patrick Leahy and Bernie Sanders.

Jen Donley, a Green Mountain Club employee, said the members were planning to celebrate

the milestone at the Double Tree Inn in South Burlington, the site where the trail and club was originally founded.

Several other events will take place throughout the year to celebrate, according to Donley, including a dinner at the Trapp Family Lodge in Stowe featuring former Gov. Howard Dean in May. The club will kick off a summer long "relay hike" with a June party in Londonderry featuring a barn dance. Several teams will complete the entire Long Trail between July 17 and Aug. 18, Donley said.

The club currently has about 9,500 members, and hopes to reach 10,000 this year, according to Donley.

About 120 hike the complete length of the Long Trail every year, and the club has about 3,500 people on record who have completed the hike, Donley said. However, it's unclear how long those records have been kept, she said.

Martha Stitelman, president of the club's Bennington chapter, said no special events were planned locally. The club is gearing up for its regular annual trail work, however, which begins "as soon as the snow melts and before the black flies come out."

"That usually gives us about three days," Stitelman said.

The Bennington chapter oversees trails between Woodford and Glastenbury Mountain.